14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

THE CHILDREN

857 The little children of the village spend their day in play, eating, and sleeping. The babies are often cared for by the grandmothers. The older children are called on to carry water or to help in some way. The older girl helps her mother in the routine duties of the day.

The little boy in the home plays games. He may have a cane-stalk and string for a fishing-rod and line, and sometimes a bent pin for a hook. When he is about eight years old he begins to herd the sheep each day. He often makes men and cattle out of mud and plays with them.

881 When he is old enough to have the tribal marks cut, his status is at once changed from that of boy to man. His privileges are also increased. He is now interested in securing cattle and sheep of his own.

857 538 524 The children love their folk-lore tales and the many animal stories that are told them by their elders. They believe these implicitly and fear the dreadful ogre that is usually the central figure of the story. They also amuse themselves by guessing riddles, of which they have a large number.

857 But while they are learning many things that are interesting and useful, they are learning many things they do not need to know. They learn to curse. They learn indecency in regard to sexual matters. Indeed, the child mind is full of many things that pollute both thoughts and actions. The lack of privacy in the village and family life account for much of this pollution of mind and action which infests the child. And there is no decidedly corrective method used by the elders of the village. Life was always so, it always will be so, they think.

THE NUER GIRL IN HER HOME LIFE

The life of a girl in the Nuer home is a foretaste of the life of the mother. The bulk of the work which can be done

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

157 received the heavy post-bag, for belated Christmas presents made it weigh more this time than usual.

The only thing that did not occur to him was that there might be any other preacher than the one at Nasser. He set out on his return trip to Nasser afoot, carrying a heavy bag of post—belonging to the Doleib Hill Mission which is about fifteen miles overland from Malakal, instead of to the Nasser Mission two hundred miles up river.

But he was blissfully ignorant of his mistake, and after a walk of seven days' duration, he delivered the Doleib Hill post-bag at the Nasser Mission, confident that there ought to be enough post in that heavy bag to gladden the hearts of all his white friends for some time.

He was deeply chagrined when told of his mistake. But possibly the memory of what he was willing to do for them will remain to gladden the hearts of his white friends longer than any news they might have received in that post-bag—had it been theirs.

Another Nuer, who knew how to steer the launch, showed his faithfulness to us by steering the launch all night when a hurried trip had to be made owing to illness. And later, even though Nuer are much averse to being close to dying persons, he would be found sitting on the porch outside the sickroom so that the nurse within—sitting by an unconscious, dying woman—might not feel so entirely alone. He had not been asked to stay there, he was not even expected to do so, but all he said was that he thought he would stay there so that the nurse might not feel entirely alone. It does not sound worth much—unless you are the nurse, alone with a hopeless case in the African stillness after midnight.

NUER GAMES

● 524 Boys make cattle out of mud, colouring them with ash or charred wood. They curve the horns and show quite a

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

524 talent for clay modelling. They may also make clay figures of persons, and play with them and their cattle.

Possibly one of the principal games played with the clay cattle is that in which a mock wedding is enacted.

The boys make a number of cattle. Then one boy chooses the girl he wants. He and his friends tell her people that he wants to marry her, and they inquire as to how many cattle he is willing to give for her. The older people of the village may join in with the children in this —to them—delightful game.

The boy makes an armlet out of a gourd in lieu of the ivory armlet, he adorns his body with all the ornaments he can possibly get, borrowing from his friends in order to supplement his own meagre supply.

He and his friends meet with the relatives of the girl, and the wedding talk, which is a real debate, goes on. The bridegroom must try to get the bride for the least possible number of cattle without saying anything disparaging about her.

After the wedding talk, food may be served to the children and possibly they may stage a little wedding dance. This game lasts over several days, and the boy-groom gets a little experience to prepare him for the time when he will be required to bring real cattle and make a reality of what to-day is a game for children.

Interesting games are played with mud-balls.

Mud-balls are arranged four in a group and there are seven groups for each of the two players. One takes up two of the first group, the other player takes the remaining two, and so on, until the last group is reached when one player takes three balls while the other player takes but one. Then each player takes his balls in both hands, shaking his hands up and down vigorously and chanting 'bir chor' repeatedly. Then each player puts his balls

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

down in groups of four each, and the player who picked up the one ball out of the last group finds that he has three in his last group now, while the other player who took three balls out of the last group is amazed to find that his last group now contains but one. They play it over and over again and enjoy it each time, but cannot explain it. 524

One boy was seen to do a trick quite cleverly by changing a mud-ball from one hand to another much to the amazement of his friends.

Another game is played with mud-balls in which points are scored as cattle with which to buy a wife. The Nuer enjoy this game very much, but they assure me it is far too difficult for me to learn and much beyond my feminine comprehension.

Boys make a ring of cane-leaves and then throw it, trying to throw a stick through it as it rolls.

They also play a game resembling shinny, and are quite clever at it.

Girls often play a game with pieces of cane-stalk about eight or ten inches long. One throws them on the ground and the way in which the different sticks fall indicates how many cattle will be paid as the marriage price; other points count as different things pertaining to the marriage. The pieces are thrown again and again, some positions in which they fall indicating the loss of a cow.

The girls play a game in which the hands are repeatedly clapped on the knees, and they chant a little song as they clap.

Little girls play house, pounding up clods of earth for dura, sifting it in order to get coarse particles out, and imitating their mothers in their work about the home.

On moonlight nights, the dance is a favourite amusement of both children and young people. A drum is made, possibly out of an old kerosene tin which has had the ends 535 534

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

vulgar type. In construction they are similar, consisting of a verse of one or more lines and a refrain. The verse is usually sung in a higher tone, the refrain being sung in lower tones. They seldom repeat any phrase over and over, but express the same meaning by the use of other words. 533

Another frequent form of amusement is the asking of riddles. If no one can guess the answer, the propounder of the riddle is asked if he or she would take so-and-so of the opposite sex as husband or wife, as the case may be. When an acceptable name is suggested, the propounder gives the answer to the riddle. 524

They have many riddles. Some seem anything but comprehensible to us, but they always tell us that 'a Nuer would understand'. Others are quite intelligible and good.

Sometimes Nuer children draw cattle or other animals; they always make the bodies rectangular in shape. A woman may draw on a gourd (Fig. 9) by making scratches and then rubbing them with charred wood, which gives the figures the effect of having been burnt in. The bodies of animals are drawn in rectangles, but other designs may be used. A border effect of points is often made. 532

MEASURING LENGTH AND HEIGHT

A Nuer indicates the length of small articles by extending the left arm and placing the tips of the fingers of his right hand at a point on the left arm. The distance between the tips of the fingers of the left hand and the place where the fingers of the right hand touch the left arm indicates the length that is meant. 804

When he desires to show the height of an animal he extends the right hand, palm downward. The distance between the ground and the extended palm is the height indicated.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

537 spring.' The ogre said, 'Is it full?' She said, 'It is full.' Mother-of-the-fox hesitated. The ogre exclaimed, 'No, give it to me at once.' She stood up. She gave it to him.

The ogre left. He talked to himself as he went along the path. 'That god of the village of mother-of-the-fox! Why! I left empty-handed without finding a thing.' The fox spoke. 'Where are you taking the gourd which belongs to the village of mother-of-the-fox? Let it down to the ground slowly.'

The ogre exclaimed, 'God, wait. I will let it down slowly.' He put it down and fled.

Then the fox exclaimed, 'Let us each catch a person.' They turned back to back. The fox ran to his village and the ogre to the ogres. The fox said, 'You, ogre, measured yourself against me. Did you find my cleverness?'

RIDDLES

524 1. Guess what are the red dates which are in the sky but never fall?
(*Answer*) They are stars.

2. Guess what tree it is which stands in the middle of the river but never goes under the water?
(*Answer*) It is a lotus.

3. Guess what is a fat woman?
(*Answer*) It is a window.

4. Guess what is a red hornless cow but its horns are of skin?
(*Answer*) It is a dog.

5. Guess what tree it is that has many hands but never climbs?
(*Answer*) It is kaffir corn.

6. Guess a red thing which carries its horn?
(*Answer*) It is a scorpion.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

524

7. Guess what big girl it is who has a dancing skirt but never goes to a dance?
   (*Answer*) It is a house. (The Nuer house has long grass eaves, crudely resembling the grass dancing skirt.)
8. Guess what big man it is near whom they have the wedding talk but he never makes a remark?
   (*Answer*) It is a barn. (The wedding talk is often staged near the barn.)
9. Guess what two males it is that hold their father?
   (*Answer*) They are pillars (supporting the barn).
10. Guess what forest it is which one may cut down but it is never finished?
    (*Answer*) It is the hair.
11. Guess what death it is where they never have the ceremony of terminating the period of mourning?
    (*Answer*) It is sleep.
12. Guess what it is which one holds but it will never overcome a person?
    (*Answer*) Kaffir corn which has been sifted. (The sifting process is called 'holding it'.)
13. Guess what are two big males which will never meet?
    (*Answer*) The clouds and the earth.
14. Guess what are two big rugs?
    (*Answer*) They are the sky and the earth.
15. Guess two big males?
    (*Answer*) They are the banks of the river.
16. Guess the crocodile which cries?
    (*Answer*) It is a (native made) fiddle.

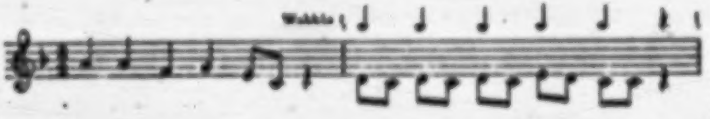
7:Tucker E-5 (1929-1933) 1933 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

Nuer FJ22

S
524
533
539

Third movement: The boys all chant together "Open and shut, Open and shut!" At the word "Open," all the toes are bent backwards, at the word "Shut" they are all bent forwards, so that the centre square of toes looks like some great black sea-anemone opening and shutting itself.

Fourth movement: Keeping their feet and toes still, the boys wobble their knees rapidly up and down. I was unable to get the words of this song, but the tune is as follows:—

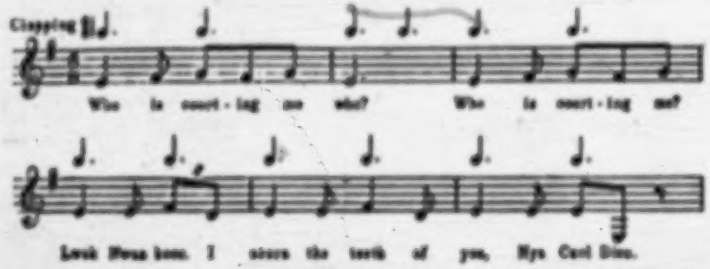


These movements can come in any order, according to the will of the song-leader.

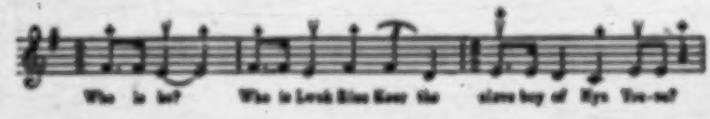
N
524
536

7. Now girls are fond of ring games, but there is little action in those that I have seen. The girls kneel in a ring; one girl sings a song of about three lines, and the rest repeat it, clapping their knees. Then the girl next to her takes up the song, extemporising upon the same theme with a view to scoring a "hit" off one of those present. If she succeeds, she is greeted with yells of approval, and all join lustily in the chorus, while the third girl cudgels her brains for the inspiration necessary to cap this verse if possible. These witticisms usually lie around the names of friends or bear some obscure reference to well-known incidents, with the result that an investigator without intimate knowledge of the children's daily affairs finds the songs unintelligible. This is one of the verses:

N
524
533
539



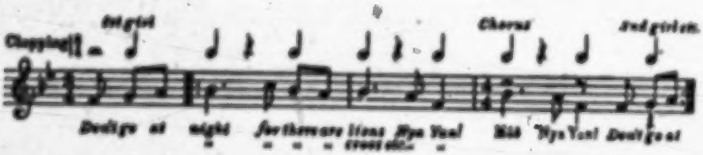
In the following song the voice rhythm (indicated V) differs markedly from the clapping rhythm (indicated ↑):



7:Tucker E-5 (1929-1933) 1933 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23
FJ22 Nuer
FJ18 Mitu

N
524
533
539

The following singing game requires rapid thought and good memory. Each girl in turn has to think of a different animal's name, the aim being not to repeat the name a previous girl has sung:—



8. *Ring o' Roses.* There are many games which comprise more dancing or capering in a ring. In the following Baka game the players first dance round in a ring, holding hands, singing:—

M
524
533
539

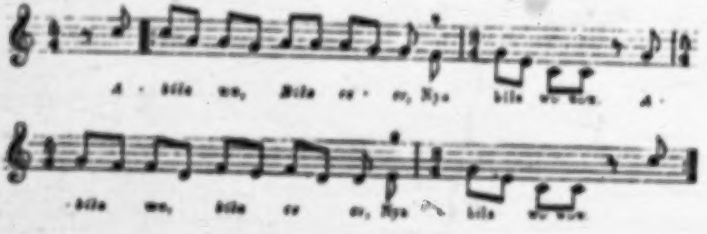
Then, with a change of the music, they swing their right legs over their arms, and hop round until they fall down. (*See* Fig. 5, Pl. XV.)

[*Note.* The note transcribed E sounds somewhere between E and F.]

9. A popular form of "Ring o' Roses" is played as follows. The Shilluk version has two parts, but the words of the song have no decipherable meaning. (Here again I found a note which was difficult to place. I have transcribed it sometimes E and sometimes F.)

S
524
533
539

First movement: The players stand in a circle with hands on each other's shoulders, and sway as they sing:—

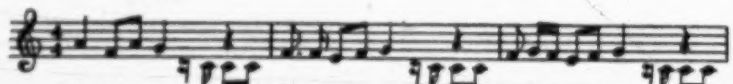


7:Tucker E-5 (1929-1933) 1933 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23
Nuer FJ22

LINE GAMES.

N
524 18. *Nuts and May.*—The Nuers have a form of this game of which the details are rather vague. The children stand in two lines, facing each other, some dozen yards apart. A member of one line advances towards the other line with a peculiar prancing step, waving his hands above his head, singing :—

N
533
539



(The words, so far as I could make out, are meaningless.) He singles out a member of the other side and chases him round both lines and back to his place. What happens if he catches him I could not find out.

S
524
533
539

The following Shilluk version is evidently a recent invention, and probably confined to the particular group of Shilluks I was studying. The boys line up in two ranks, as if for "Nuts and May." One line advances towards the other, marching slowly in "goose step" (see Fig. 4, Pl. XVI), while the other line retreats, both sides singing :—

Then the song is repeated, while the other line advances, and so on, to and fro, several times. Suddenly the pace is doubled ; the boys running stiff-legged, those advancing trying to kick the shins of those who are retreating. The song now is :—

As before, on every repetition the direction is changed